



International Solidarity Reflection

School Sisters of Notre Dame

Shalom

Courageous Women and Children

March 2016

Introduction

In our times, too, the life of women in countless countries and regions of our world is not held in esteem but disparaged and oppressed instead. In their professional fields, social life, or family decision-making processes, women often have no equal voice vis-à-vis the men. We find a painful example of this in India. The scale of violence against girls and women in India is shocking and an alarming result of the social disdain of the feminine population.

The government campaign implemented in 2015 – “It’s a girl!” – made creative use of modern media to counteract this. In order to promote a positive attitude on the part of parents toward their female descendants, the government chose the type of photography that now enjoys the greatest popularity and is used around the world, selfies taken by cellphones. In a so-called “Selfie with Daughter,” one sees parents who proudly present themselves with their daughters. The viral distribution of these photos gives countless people the message that it is awesome to have a daughter. This can make for a small but significant step toward a change in consciousness – women are important and precious!



Call to Prayer

God, our Father and our Mother, we are your beloved and awesome daughters. Let us feel your energy in our joy over this. Help us and help all people throughout the world who commit themselves to justice and equal rights.

Experience

Aida was in the Moosburg Parish Community Center, stirring something in a huge pot. She had cooked “alidcha,” a vegetable stew, for about fifty persons. It is a national dish from Eritrea, her homeland. Like so many other people fleeing the persecution and subjugation of the authoritarian regime there, she left Eritrea two and a half years ago. She was only eighteen and could laugh heartily. She appeared to be easygoing, but when I asked about her family, her face became very serious and she looked considerably older. She told me that it is very difficult for her to learn German. She eventually said that she was not allowed to attend school in Eritrea and that now she has to begin learning how to study. She is very diligent, however, and dreams about doing an apprenticeship in household arts. Then she suddenly became radiant again. In her eyes, there was a flash of hope, which, despite all her difficulties, she had not lost.

After having completed her masters program, **Nadine** decided to share the life, ministry, and daily routine of the sisters in another country for one year. Now she lives in Nyalieng'a near Homa Bay in western Kenya, where she shares her gifts, skills, and abilities with the Children Outreach program. Nadine is twenty-five. She grew up in a sheltered environment in a village in southern Germany. She never had to deal with physical violence, never experienced violence – neither personally nor with others – until recently when she saw a man brutally whipping a girl. Her formerly ideal world was shattered. Deeply shaken by a situation that she could have never even imagined before, she cried all night long. The next morning she was faced with the choice: “Do I want to fall into despair because there is such violence among us, or would I like to grow from this experience and change something?” She decided for the latter, looked for an opportunity to speak with others whom she knew and trusted, reflected much, and found support and encouragement. Her courageous decision was to continue giving of herself and allowing herself be challenged by all that is unknown and unfamiliar in her life in Kenya.

Reflection

- In our rule, it states that in our ministries, we are especially sensitive to women (YAS, C 24). To what extent does this happen in my life? Which courageous women do I encounter? Where do I recognize injustice toward women and how do I respond?
- The bible is a written document of its time – a time when women were usually not very highly esteemed socially. Therefore, the feminine strength, which has always been effective through courageous witnesses, must often be discovered between the lines. Set out and search for the clues!
- To what extent is my own life story a testimony of courage and feminine assertiveness? Am I able to regard my femininity and my life experiences with tenderness and appreciation?

Action

- Watch the film *Malala* about the life of the child rights' activist, Malala Yousafzai. Let yourself to be moved by the story of this striking young woman and share her story with others.
- Ask women in your surroundings about their (life) stories, especially your own companion sisters! Each one has something impressive to tell. Let her testimony give you strength and joy.
- On March 8, we celebrate International Women's Day. Follow the Vatican event, *Voices of Faith*. In what ways are women present and involved in this event?

Closing Prayer

God be with you, God be your friend.

She gave you the earth with heaven as its roof.

She will make your days bright and protect you from the tin gods.

She goes with you into a land where it will be easier to be good.

Amen.

Dorothee Sölle